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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington D.C. 20250 (202) 447-4330

Letter No. 2440

Dec. 8, 1989

U.S. AGRICULTURE is more dependent on the health of the world economy today than ever before, according to the latest issue of the National Food Review. The international value of the dollar is important to U.S. farmers because it is a key factor in determining the international price of U.S. goods. The October-December issue of the Food Review features articles on ag trade reform. For a copy, or more information, contact: Lewrene Kay Glaser (202) 786-3313.

CHINA EMERGED has the biggest importer of U.S. wheat during the marketing year just ended, despite its frequent position as one of the world's largest wheat producers. The increase in price and volume of U.S. wheat exports helped raise U.S. ag exports to China to \$759 million in 1988, slightly more than double the 1987 figure. Despite the political turmoil in China's major cities this spring, ag production has been virtually unaffected. Contact: Frederick W. Crook or Francis Tuan (202) 786-1626.

NEW FOOD STAMP DEMO PROJECT -- Nearly 4,000 low-income households in a Baltimore, Md., suburb will be eligible to try using a plastic card rather than food stamps to buy their groceries. The cost of the food will automatically be subtracted from the household's total monthly food stamp allotment. Also, food stamp recipients will, for the first time, be able to use the plastic card for other benefits, such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Contact: Phil Shanholtzer (703) 856-3276.

POINSETTIAS ARE NOT POISONOUS -- Even though the incident that originally alarmed the public took place more than 70 years ago, the public is still concerned about poinsettias toxicity and safety, says Horticulturist Tom Pope of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service in Baton Rouge. "The poinsettia is the most widely tested consumer plant," Pope says. "Although the plant is not poisonous to people or pets, it is not meant to be eaten." Contact: Thomas Pope (504) 388-4141.



NIKOLAI G. PERVOV, agricultural attache' of the Soviet Embassy, attended the Agricultural Outlook Conference and visited with USDA R&TV's Marci Hilt and Vic Powell. Dr. Pervov will be returning to the Soviet Union at the end of December.

RURAL MOBILITY -- The old saw, "You can't get there from here," unfortunately, describes the transportation today for too many rural residents. Loss of air and intercity bus services during the past decade has left many rural communities with limited access to any form of public transportation, says Martin E. Fitzpatrick, Jr., administrator of USDA's Office of Transportation. Responding to this concern, Fitzpatrick's agency has issued a new report "Reconnecting Rural America: Recommendations for a National Strategy." Contact: Larry Mark (202) 447-3977.

WHAT'S WHITE, FLUFFY & SMELLS OF JASMINE? A new long-grain rice, says USDA Scientist Charles N. Bollich. The new rice -- Jasmine 85 -- could be a domestic substitute for the 100,000 tons of specialty "aromatic" rices we now import each year at a premium price. "In fact," Bollich says, "a taste panel rated Jasmine 85 as high or higher in aroma, taste and texture as Thai Jasmine rice." Contact: Charles N. Bollich (409) 752-2741.

A FUNGUS FROM AUSTRALIA is showing great promise as a possible natural weapon to control range & crop devastations by grasshoppers. According to Jerry Fowler, director of USDA's Grasshopper Integrated Pest Management project, said tests with the fungus indicate it can infect and kill a broad range of grasshoppers. "We believe this fungus could play an important part in an integrated approach to grasshopper control," he says. Contact: Doug Hendrix (208) 334-9629.

SONOGRAMS HELP ANIMAL SCIENTISTS, TOO -- Sonograms that track the growth of human fetuses are also giving USDA scientists new insights on how poisonous plants harm lamb and goat fetuses. Sonograms show that toxins in certain plants, when eaten by a pregnant sheep or goat, deform a fetus because they restrict its normal movement in the womb, says USDA Scientist Kip E. Panter. "It's as if the fetus were being sedated," he says. Contact: Kip E. Panter (801) 752-2941.

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1696 -- Manmade changes in the earth's atmosphere may be causing changes in the climate. On this edition of Agriculture USA, Gary Crawford presents the views of various experts on the question of global climate change. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 min. documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1178 -- Wreck the halls; know your trees; floral and nursery business update; tomorrow's newspapers; holiday cookbooks. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 - 3 min. consumer features.)

AGRIITAPE #1685 -- USDA news highlights; 1989 crop deficiency payments; National Resources Inventory; new crops; backup on the Mississippi. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1249 -- Flavor and nutrition; passionate OJ?; off-flavor fish; understanding algae; better tasting water. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Tues., Dec. 12, U.S. crop production report; weekly weather and crop outlook; world ag. supply and demand. Wed., Dec. 13, ag income outlook; world ag. grain situation; world cotton situation; world oilseed situation. Fri., Dec. 15, milk production report; Mon., Dec. 18, cattle on feed report.
DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359. Material changed at 5 p.m. EST each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE

AGRICULTURE UPDATE -- ASCS program analyst Orville Overboe on 1989 wheat and barley deficiency payments; Phil Scronce, program analyst, talks about corn and sorghum loan extensions; CCC interest rate; and 1990 ELS cotton program.

FEATURES -- Pat O'Leary reports on 1990 food prices; Lynn Wyvill has the story on mail order food safety; Chris Larson reports on the National Resources Inventory; Lisa Telder covers hazardous trash; Gary Beaumont reports on farming bottomland and water quality.

ACTUALITIES -- USDA chief meteorologist Dr. Norton Strommen with a weather update; USDA trade analyst Frank Gomme on wheat and rice outlook; USDA economist Scott Sanford on cotton outlook; USDA economist Nancy Cochrane on Polish agriculture; SCS chief Wilson Scaling on the National Resource Inventory.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- Research on taking off weight and keeping it off; 1989 Christmas tree sales; durable press cotton fabric; and cloning Christmas trees.

Available on satellite (Dec. 7, 9 & 11) Westar IV, audio 6.2 or 6.8:

THURSDAY 7:30-7:45 p.m., EST, Transponder 12D
SATURDAY 10:30-11:15 a.m., EST, Transponder 10D
MONDAY 8:30-9:15 a.m., EST, Transponder 12D
(Repeat of Saturday transmission)

OFFMIKE

THREE...to four inches of snow on the ground is providing cover for winter crops, says Karl Guenther (WKZO, Kalamazoo, Mich.) about half the amount predicted. Producers are increasingly using computers for records and planning. Michigan State Cooperative Extension classes on software and computer education are larger each winter. Karl says about 15 percent of producers in the state use computers in farm operations.

TOO...much moisture hampered production and harvesting, says Jerry Gehman (WASG, Atmore, Ala.). Eleven inches fell in one day last month with such force that it knocked cotton bolls to the ground and further delayed harvest. Says the biggest surprise this year was a late season freeze during Spring that killed 30 percent of wheat in the state. Many producers plowed it under and planted to other crops. Jerry says his winter schedule is chock full of county and state meetings.

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Office of Public Affairs
Radio-TV Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250-1300

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A LOT...of optimism was shown at the Amarillo Farm and Ranch Show, says Bob Givens (KGNC, Amarillo, Tex.). Record number of exhibitors and attendees. KGNC sponsors the event. Most producers are doing much better than last year. A major concern, however, is dryness. No rain was registered last month, and only two-tenths of an inch so far this month, stressing winter wheat.

PRODUCERS...had an excellent year, says Bill Mason (WGFI, Greenville, Ill.), many harvesting 130 bushel an acre corn and getting excellent double-crop beans. It was a result of getting rain when it was needed because Bill says subsoil moisture is in bad shape. Producers doing fence repair notice dryness just below the surface. Aquifers are in a dire need of recharge this winter.


VIC POWELL
Chief, Radio & TV Division